1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

holding this title had very few of these offices left—they were now the rights of persons holding quite different titles.

The economy of Bornu was a semi-specialized one. Almost everyone grew some crops, except a few cattle nomads, but at the same time during the long dry season people carried on craftwork, trade, and other specialized activities, such as providing medical or barbering services, or entertainment for those who were willing to pay. Everyone had access to new land, over which a person might establish ownership by his act of clearing it. If he used the land for only a few years, and stopped, then the land passed back into bush with no owner. Continued long-term use, especially that involving inheritance, meant that the owner could do with it what he pleased and transfer it to whomever he pleased. In other words the Kanuri had property concepts of usufruct or use-right, but they also had notions of freehold or private property in which land could be transferred by an individual after he had used it for a long time, or it had been passed on to his heirs.

The people raised specialized crops in the kingdom and practiced a myriad of different crafts. Each local craft was organized into a craft guild that helped set production and price standards under a local craft leader who benefited economically from his position and tried to pass it down through the male line. Markets, too, were under headmen and all goods to be traded went to weekly markets to which came thousands of people from the surrounding area.

Trade was accomplished by barter for the most part, although several forms of currency developed, which can be called special purpose or limited purpose money. For various kinds of trade, and within limits, certain objects—a man's robe, iron bars, slaves, horses, cotton rolls, Maria Theresa dollars, and other items—could be used. The trans-Saharan trader came to Bornu for slaves; he therefore demanded payment in slaves, and slaves became a kind of currency for this trade. People from Bornu traded south of Lake Chad for iron bars. These bars could be used to purchase anything in the markets southeast of Bornu where they were the chief export commodity. The same thing is true of cloth in the southern areas of Bornu where it was manufactured and where it was a major export item. Cloth rolls purchased any number of commodities from Bornu but only in that north-south trade. Cowrie shells came very late to Bornu (1820–1850) and never achieved the success as currency that they did elsewhere.

Another and important method of distribution of goods was carried out within the political system itself. Political superiors gave out enormous quantities of cloth, food, horses, and robes on particular holy days or special events such as rites of passage, or wrestling matches. On one occasion a witness in the early part of the century watched the Shehu give away more than a thousand men's robes and an equal number of bullocks and sheep. Although one would expect the leaders to give more than other men, they also served as a model for the population so that the amount of distribution actually carried on in this way must have been very great indeed.

Another important facet of the economy was foreign trade. Although the famous trans-Saharan caravans are supposed to have declined during the nineteenth century, by all accounts they were still of considerable importance for Bornu. Into Bornu came calico, cotton prints, fine silk, sword blades, writing paper, looking glasses, needles, razors, scissors, knives, cheap jewelry, and guns mostly from Eu-

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throughout the emirate. Roads were built connecting the district capitals to Maiduguri, the major city of Bornu and to one another, and district capital markets came to be among the most active because of the increased population in the district capitals not producing their own goods.

In the economic sphere the colonial era sounded a death knell for the Saharan trade. A dribble of caravan trade still exists, but it was the express policy of the British to face Bornu around and turn its trade toward Nigeria and the Nigerian ports. Caravans were heavily taxed, and European trading companies were encouraged to move into Bornu and start circulating cash and cheap import goods. These few large English and French trading companies encouraged the appearance of a corps of Levantine traders who are ubiquitous in West Africa. They take credit from the large companies, giving it out again to large numbers of Africans who buy and sell for them. By the second world war ground-nuts were a well established cash crop, marketed through these companies although controlled by the government. When inflationary boom prices for ground-nuts hit Bornu after the war, the people were ready to take full advantage of it and there was a surge upwards of consumer buying, so that radios, bicycles, and many other industrial commodities became part of local life. On the other hand, judging by the surprise registered in the annual reports of the colonical officials, the government was a little stunned at first to know what to do with its increased revenues. However a host of new improvements began to be an accepted part of life in the public sector, just as new import items became common to the private sector. The most recent of such changes has already been mentioned in Chapter 1. After independence, the digging of deep wells increased the cattle population enormously and has provided a basis for further development in the area. This, then, is the Bornu background. It is a long and eventful one—and the people are proud of it. For an anthropologist, one of the most intriguing questions to ask is "why"—why has Bornu lasted so long in this area? Why has it adapted so well to modern times? It has absorbed Shehu Laminu's destruction of the Sefuwa dynasty, Rabeh's conquest, the colonial overlordship, and national independence in its calm stride. Its leaders and its people are remarkably stable—yet not enslaved by tradition. Indeed they strive to change and develop Bornu and their future is a bright and hopeful one. In the chapters to follow I hope to provide answers to these questions in order that we may ask them again after considering in more detail the quality of life in Bornu.

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ally about once a month, a beef-cow or bull. During the wet season he kills about one or two beef cattle a week. He sells the meat by strips and a very rough estimate of his income from the meat and the sale of the skin comes to approximately $450 per year. Most of the townspeople of Magumeri think of Mala Bukar as one of the wealthiest of the village's permanent residents, leaving aside the salaried officials sent out from the city who have been posted to Magumeri. However, both as we observed it, and as Mala Bukar claimed repeatedly, people begged meat from him continually for which he never received any money. In four weeks of almost continous observation I estimated he lost about ten percent of his meat this way, although he claimed it was often much higher, ranging up to forty percent on occasion. Everyone agrees that that is the price of wealth, for the Kanuri believe that the proper use of wealth is its distribution to one's dependents and to the community at large in order that one may achieve fully the acclaim and prestige that wealth confers. If Mala Bukar hoarded his earnings to buy more animals and obtain more apprentices and thus increase his productivity, people would see him as a foolish man who was using his wealth unproductively. Kanuri wealth should be used to enhance and maintain status, and status is achieved through supporting and creating subordinates by giving away wealth.

Distribution

Kanuri households do not produce everything they consume and thus of necessity must obtain what they need from other sources in the community. Wives are given market money weekly by their husbands to purchase ingredients for gruel as well as for their own needs. The household head, on his part, must purchase grain when his own supplies are short as well as clothing and supplies such as tools or firewood for the entire compound. Things made, produced, or purchased for trade by the household members must be sold or exchanged in order to obtain necessities not produced within the compound. This is the basic quality in Bornu out of which stems an elaborate and complicated system of trade that provides for the distribution of goods and services to those who need them, when they need them, in quantities they can afford.

Almost all households in rural Bornu, and many in the city as well, have two main marketing tasks. First the cash crop, most often ground-nuts, must be sold, and secondly the specialized production or services provided by the household must be made available to the community. Let us go over each of these briefly and then move into the market cycle itself to see how the system operates as a whole.

During the harvest season from November to January men from the city appear at every major market village in Bornu. They bring scales with them and set up temporary huts close to the nearest motor road. When a household head harvests the crop, he takes it to these "scale men" and sells it by the bag. Government inspectors are on hand to check the scales daily and the quality of the nuts as well. The scale men generally bring cloth and other import items with them so that when a householder gets his cash he can spend some of it immediately thus giving the buyer a little extra profit. For the householder this may be the largest single payment

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592 in cash he receives all year and he has made elaborate plans for its disposal. He
443 often watches the scale men for several weeks asking questions about them from other
43 farmers, perhaps even going to visit a few to see if he can obtain a slightly better
[455] price than that set by the government. On their side the scale men may try to buy a "future" if they see the farmer is in trouble. This involves a cash advance and a much lower final sale price which is intended to cover the greater risk by the buyer since the crop may fail. This practice is illegal, and there have been very serious attempts to stamp it out.

592 Craft production and special services such as religious prayers or barbering
443 are made available in several ways. If someone needs a new hoe, or a mat, or a cal-
445 abash, or the services of a religious person, he may go to that person's household and ask for it. Even in large villages whose markets are open every day it is still common to go to the household of a producer and purchase things when they are required. On the other hand for many things it is still common to go to the market and see what is available.

443 Markets are held weekly and referred to by the day of the week they are
[192] held in any particular village. More often than not people use this weekday as an-
[103] other name for the village itself. Thus in Magumeri a man says, "I am going to Thursday this Monday," meaning that on Monday he is going to Ngubbura, the village that has its market on Thursdays. Even large villages whose market places are open every day are known to have one day a week that is their "real" market day. Thus the market in Maiduguri, the capital city, is much busier on Mondays, its named market day, than during the rest of the week. The reason for this is the link-up of market villages into interlocking cycles.

The best way to understand a market cycle is to ask a Kanuri, "What mar-
[196] kets do you visit?" He then generally gives you a village for every day in the week except for Friday, the Moslem sabbath. These are a series of villages of medium
443 size, usually within a radius of five to ten miles from the village in which you
434 asked the question. Not everyone goes to a market every day, but they know of one
438 in their vicinity and may go to as many as three or four a week if they are busy trading goods. Sometimes they may visit two villages on the same market day one in one direction this week, then another one in the other direction next week, but to a remarkable degree Bornu markets do have a weekly cycle in which people can visit a market close by on any day of the six working days of the week. The reason these weekly market cycles are interlocking stems from the fact that no two villages have exactly the same cycle. Thus a man in Magumeri might go to Ardoram eight miles north of Magumeri for his Monday market, but the Magumeri man goes to Ngubbura five miles to the south of his own village for the Thursday market. On the other hand on that same day the Ardoram man goes further north to a village in *his* cycle rarely ever visited by the Magumeri people, and he in his turn does not often attend the Ngubbura market which is thirteen miles south of Ardoram. So each village has some, but not all, markets in common with others close by, and the entire countryside is linked into interlocking sets of these weekly market cycles. It is important to remember here that many people walk to market, and it is more difficult for the Ardoram man to walk the twenty-six miles to and from Ngubbura market than it is to walk the much shorter distance to his own Thursday market.

476 Another source of labour is the serwa (co-operative work group). This is composed of a group of relatives, friends, and neighbours, not necessarily of the same age group. They help one another to farm, fix or build houses, repair compound walls and other jobs requiring collective effort. These serwa are easily joined and as easily left and may have a long or short life depending upon the interest of the members in obtaining such a labour source.

241 464 For the upper classes and urban farm owners, labourers (usually pagan) are always available during the growing season. Many of these are local pagans living in Bornu, others are migrant labourers who have come to Bornu during the growing season to obtain their cash income for taxes.(1)

251 When the crop is harvested, food grains are taken from their stalks and stored in underground pits. Although the Kanuri utilize some aboveground storage shelters, underground storage is more widespread.

43 The cash crop (groundnuts) is sold to middlemen (sent to the bush during the harvest season to buy for traders in the city). Surplus producers of food crops store their harvest and visit markets for the rest of the year selling their produce. In Magumeri, two-thirds of the cultivators questioned in the survey were only semi-subsistence farmers. Part but not all of this is made up of income from the cash crop. Thus most people who farm have some other income-producing activity which makes up for the fact that they do not grow enough food or cash crop to maintain themselves for an entire year.

463 829 Craft production includes such occupations as butcher, blacksmith, potter, entertainer, leather worker, native doctor, hunter, dyer, lorry driver, mechanic, bricklayer. This is the Kanuri way of viewing,

(1) See Kirke-Greene, A.H.M., Tax and Travel Among the Hill-Tribes of Northern Adamawa, Africa, Vol. 26, No. 4 (1956) pp. 355-369.

433 458 These figures show the spectacular rise in cash income which the Kanûri have enjoyed in the past two decades, and it is this fact basically, rather than increased productivity, which has accounted for the widespread innovations of industrially produced import goods.(1)

433 571 Crop production is also affected by the lability of interpersonal relations. If it is personally profitable for an individual to become the subordinate of someone else, then he may leave his farm work in order to enter the service of his new superior. Many individuals (especially young men) suggested to the writer that if he would take them on as tada njima (sons of the house, pseudo sons) and give them money to trade, they would go anywhere in Bornu, whether or not they had crops growing at the time. Of course, if they had other sources of labour besides their own, then their crops would not be affected by their absence, but such considerations did not seem to be important to them.

433 55 Finally, it should be realized that it is part of both the traditional and contemporary Kanuri conception of upward mobility that personal advancement is not to be found in farming. Achievement in Bornu is rather a function of profitable social relations and, more recently, western education. As social and cultural change proceeds, and progressively more full-time employment in the larger towns develops the urban growth and the attractions of the city for the peasant cultivator forms a continual pull on the rural population, and, therefore, on crop production. At present the rapid urban growth has not been felt as forcibly as it might be because of the large numbers of city dwellers who still maintain and work rural farms during the growing season.

433 369

(1) Cf. Winter, E.H., Bwamba Economy, East African Studies, No. 5, (1955), especially pp. 41-44.